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ABSTRACT

A value-based approach to the study and application of ethical principles is proposed. After a brief introduction to the problems of the concept of value within the framework of ethical theory, it is demonstrated that values are epistemological predicates. This "predicate" understanding of value statements is used to critique a popular approach to moral development, and argue a more precise, yet generalizable, understanding of value language as it relates to ethics and education. The resulting moral development model has four interesting aspects: (1) the model broadens the concept of value to include interests, preferences, and desires into its repertory of meanings, and the model narrows the concept of value by excluding moral judgments; (2) implied consequences may not be the intended or real consequences of an action; (3) moral "universal values" are abstracts that must become the subject of predication before they can become active values and public reality; and (4) the responsibility of moral decision making is placed upon the valuing person. The result is a consequentialist approach to precepts and their application, with an analysis of preferences, motives, and reasons for particular choices. The very concept of ethics presupposes introspective and objective analysis and mastery of behavior toward ends that are edifying to the individual and society. (TJH)

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VALUING AS THE KEY TO EDUCATION'S MORAL CONCERNS

This paper proposes a 'value-based' approach to the study and application of ethical principles. First, this will require a brief introduction to the problems of the concept of 'value' within the framework of ethical theory. A section will follow in which it will be demonstrated that values are epistemological predicates. Finally, this 'predicate' understanding of value statements will be used to critique and clarify some limitations of a popular approach to moral development (Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg, 1989), and argue a more precise, and more generalizable, understanding of value language as it relates to ethics and education.

The idea for this approach came from a recent reading of Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg, and is suggested by the experimental programs described by the authors: Cluster, School-Within-a-School, and Scarsdale. Values are frequently referred to by the authors, and in one four-paragaphed discussion the term appears some twenty times (1989:14). The intended meaning generally appears to be sociological. For example, the authors refer to a "'value system' or body of norms." With this they appear to suggest the coherence of a set of mutually reinforcing value-orientations. Similarly they mention the "consensual values of society" and later "value-directions" as though some teleological model may represent the case. Significantly, for their point of view, a different classification is suggested with a statement attributed to Kohlberg: "The most fundamental [values] are termed moral values, and the major moral values, at least in our society, are the values of justice." (1989:15) On this they suggest a legal meaning by making a reference to the U. S. Constitution; but more fundamentally, they interject a relativistic presupposition - "at least in our society." A "diversity of values" is mentioned on one occasion, thus suggesting plurality rather than homogeneity. Yet with other references they make a realist(as opposed to a nominalist) assumption by referring to "universal values" as though one concept may apply to all cases. Again justice is included, along with equality and brotherhood(1989:43). The assumptions as to the

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meaning of 'values' is neither clear or consistent, and some refinement toward a clear and stable understanding is in order.

I

Axiology, or value theory, represents one of the more interesting, more complex, and problematic areas of philosophy. It has direct bearing on the study of ethics. One of the simpler problems relates to the classification of values. For example, some things are valued for their utility; they may be used as instruments for other purposes. Other things are valued because they are good in and of themselves. For example, when young Dorothy was swept up by a storm and taken to the Munchkins (Baum, 1969), she viewed her home in Kansas as the place to be. It was an intrinsic good, while the yellow brick road and the Emerald City with its Wonderful(?) Wizard were the means to it. Aside from the moral problems facing the famous road's thoughtless and cowardly travelers, the road, the city, and the Wizard had no necessary moral connotations, except for some symbolic meaning either implied by the author or that which some reader may dare to assign it. Their value was utilitarian.

Classification compounds in its relation to ends-means consistency, especially when an action is taken with moral intentions in mind, when the utility of an action is perceived as an instrument of something good. An ideal model would be one for which the end in view becomes a consummatory experience in the sense that it is the embodiment of all that preceded it, that means to ends are not only effective but also consistent with any moral precept as motive or object of the course of action. They are moral in the same way and for the same reason; the good life is the good life, while achieving it has been the work of many acts of kindness. Intentionality on the one hand, and means-ends consistency on the other, open the possibility that a moral judgment about some pattern of action is in order. It follows that any actor fitting the case may be 'valuing' some conception of the good life.

Another problem relates to the privacy of moral judgments. For example, consider life as a pilgrimmage. In one way it represents a series of judgments, indicating at each progressive step of

the journey that each action was seen at the time as good(moral) because the end was judged to be good in and of itself. This may especially be the case if something on the order of virtue - goodness as such endowed with the power of its own example - is driving a pattern of behavior taken to be worthy of one's own life and death. The single-mindedness of this position represents the ideal in which virtue or some comparable expression of that ideal is paramount. Even to boast of one's virtue is to become the living error against which Kierkegaard (1956:53) warned, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." To assert the self is to will not one thing but two, and will divide one's loyalty to the principle involved. Because the person lives(or dies) for the principle, and self-advocacy may distract from the primacy of the principle, this alone may be taken as sufficient to assure the privacy of some commitments to high motive. Consistent with this view, the intensely personal behavior is valued because it is personal and satisfaction to the self is sufficient. On this account the valuing that has taken place needs no public approval.

Consider privacy from another extreme, according to which another person is on the same geographic journey but is taking a different moral journey. The traitor Judas, with a different sense of what is good or bad seems to have judged the events leading to the crucifixion of Jesus as ill-conceived. For Judas, the correspondence of means and ends no longer rests upon moral consistency but operational expediency as betrayal becomes a viable response to whatever he may have chosen to oppose. At least the poet Robinson Jeffers (1977:27) portrayed Judas as having thought something like this. An advocate of the poor and of peace to Jeffers, he accordingly portrayed the traitor as one having grave concern that Jesus may become the leader of an insurrection and miscarry on the nobler objectives of his mission. As Judas saw Jesus, his was simply the virtue of another man, and it should be measured against likely consequences. For Jeffers, the place of virtue has been taken by moral skepticism. From this stance values seem to become relative and transitory; but, even so, the process of valuing is present. Incongruous though it seems to call betrayal a value, Judas valued it just the same as means to his private ends. His action was operationally similar to any other valuing, though the objectives of the process - and any moral connotations - may shift and vary by a long measure.

This introduces still another problem, which is the *situational* nature of most moral judgments. The poet's fantasies aside, one person's values may responsibly be judged either good or bad by another; the same act may be judged as good or bad depending upon the circumstances, or good or bad depending upon the intentions of the actor involved. Extremes will illustrate the point. One the one hand there is the so-called conventional, or non-reflective, morality which is often at a loss in circumstances similar to that of Jesus and Judas. For example, some people who have upheld Jesus as their God and Judas as his traitor, may have been known to have justified, if only to themselves, the lynching of an accused but uncharged rape suspect. The valuing processes of the actors are thoughtlessly - shamelessly - displayed with no thought of their contradiction. The correct moral judgment is one of indignation; but, who would have objected if someone like Albert Speer had betrayed Adolph Hitler on the eve of the Second World War?

Situation and privacy relate to another problem: the known as opposed to the unknown reasons for action. People will, with a variety of objectives in mind, display behavior accepted as correct, invoke some degree of virtue as his/her rationale for an action, while privately proceeding from motives only partially known or not known at all. These may be either consistent or inconsistent with the publicized reasons. Because this is often the possibility about which an outside party can seldom be sure, an outside judgment about the actor's moral commitments are necessarily superficial until the motives for his/her behavior may become known. Given imperfect people in an imperfect world, it follows that most human behavior will fall between the extremes or virtue and opportunism. Their good-seeming deeds are comparable to what Kultgen has described in a different context as prudentialism (1988:34), according to which apparently principled behavior is used ultimately to protect the self more than to serve in any final way the spirit of any truly ethical precepts. The superficial, or observable behavior, may be taken as representing tactical values; in a word, the means to some end, while the end itself, the motive being served by the means, is strategic. Unless there is nothing to hide, motives understandably tend to remain private, and because they do, the valuing process is obscured until by some unintended consequence they may inadvertently be revealed.

A final problem area is represented by the status given to values in one's general interpretation of reality. One person may argue that values have no reality aside from the actor, and another that they are truly objective with an existence in their own right, and pointedly so if they bear moral connotation. According to Perry (1930:40-48), Plato took this position. Holding that Virtue, Justice, and Truth are essential as opposed to the 'accidental' quality of phenomena or appearances, they came to enjoy for him what we have come to call an a priori, or transcendent, status. If one can be casual about the description, this leaves values, or Forms as Plato described them, more real than life itself. However, one person's moral certitude does not establish a value as a transcendental any more than another person's opinion on a similar or dissimilar value-theory preference establishes the same a priori notion as bad. Is virtue no more than a theoretical construct? This question forces the treatment of a problem in which subjectivism and privacy (as these relate to value), relativity and situational aspects of value, and prudentialism must be addressed.

II

The complex and imperative nature the value problem is not unlike an overturned fisherman's tackle box. There are hooks on every lure. Yet the foregoing analysis contains one important thread of consistency because 'valuing' has been carefully referred to as a process. Hence values are assumed to be predicates; virtue was a value to Jesus because he actively valued a course of action that defined something on the order of what we have come to call virtue, while values of a different order were 'values' because Judas valued them. This predicate nature of value-language is the clue by which the lures will be disentangled and the full range of analytical considerations rationalized: utility as opposed to intrinsic worth, values morally neutral as opposed to values that are the essence of morality; means-ends relationships that are merely descriptive, others that are clearly given to moral judgment, and means-ends relationships that break down; and morals taken as transcendental as opposed to metaphysical skepticism.

The same goes for the imperative nature of the problem. It pleads for clarity, the need for some common ground upon which persons can agree, the need for conceptual(and interpersonal) understandings that facilitate ethical analysis. This means that the task of ethics is to identify the ground, define the terms, on which modification and reinforcement of human behavior may move that behavior toward ends that are judged and agreed as good. In this sense it is coterminus with the object of this effort at analytical value theory, in which values are considered to be epistemological predicates. Toward this end two general responses may be made: first, to the metaphysicians and theologians; and second, to Plato's error, for his error goes to the root of the problems; a root which, in turn - Plato's ancient opinion notwithstanding - supports the solution being proposed.

As to The first of these points, analytical ethics may divorce itself from the commitments of religion and speculative philosophy and at the same time be of service to metaphysical persuasions and those based on revelation - by limiting the formal ethical task to analysis. This way it does not attempt to address the soul, nor stir into remission the hubris of one whose guilt before God is taken as the basis for transforming all human behavior into a metaphysical issue. It addresses behavior: with reference to its moral consistency, with reference to how lives reach out toward some perceived good society to be fulfilled in some mutually satisfying way.

Yet at the same time ethical analysis may, and should, clarify the nature of any commitments, earthbound and otherwise, in the form of dedication to sound ethical principle. It should also clarify the benefits and the cost. This may be something short of the ends that drove great people like Jesus and Gandhi and Mother Teresa. At the very best ethical analysis can only serve these ends; it cannot create them. These commitments to trans-empirical ends are formulated in the mind of the believer, constituted of whatever he or she may believe in, and are borne in one's actions. This is, to be certain, value-oriented behavior; but is of interest to ethics only in the phenomenological and analytical sense, while just as surely ethics can serve those commitments in the same limited way.

This introduces the second point, for it is on this ground that a predicate theory of value is being advanced in order to further clarify both the principles of ethics and the processes from

which morally desirable behavior ensues. The idea of predicate theory is not new even though it seldom bears this label. Plato correctly observed the predicate nature of the concepts of virtue and justice because they describe the actions of persons; and because this implied, for him, the permanence of certain predicates, he was emboldened to take the metaphysical leap and assign them the status of Forms (Perry, 1930:48). By his measure our best behavior is but a mere shadow compared to timeless Virtue, but by taking this step Plato blurred the distinction between subject and predicate while the difference between the two has important epistemological significance for value analysis.

The point may be illustrated by considering the nature of grammatical predicates; for example:

Romeo desires Juliette.

The subjective case noun does no more for the reader than identify the person, while the predicate tells something about him. The predicate is the critical element in this statement because there is no reason to mention Romeo, whose name is one among many, unless there is indeed something more to be said about him. In this case it is an action relevant to the broader discussion, for to desire(as an act of cognition) is to value. As existence precedes essence(in the sense that actions precede our description of them), so do instances of desire(valuing) precede the classification of those desires, or in this case the assigning of those desires to some living entity. The nominative case assumes existence while the predicate gives the evidence of it - and *predication is* the evidence.

An abstract noun may be used to illustrate the same point, in particular, one that relates to the abstract quality of human intelligence. This is knowledge. Again, as existence precedes essence(in the same sense as above), so does thought precede knowledge. It is inseparable from the thinking, acting, knowing person, inseparable from the active consciousness, the memory, the growing self-awareness from which all cognitively directed behavior proceeds - inseparable from predication. The 'knowledge' concept is a mere descriptor, though not an unimportant one, for a class of subject behavior: learning and remembering. It is in no sense an a priori value, but may be valued none the less for what it is. Dewey lent support to this point of view by saying that "Judgments about values are judgments about the conditions and results of experienced objects; judgments about that which should regulate the formation of our desires, affections and

enjoyments." (1929:265) On this point the claim is established that any meaningful reference to values must take account of their predicate nature; moreover, that there are no indices to what those values are save the things that people do one with another, one to another, or in concert, and of course our interaction with our total environment.

The recognition of the predicative nature of valuing is the epistemological crux of this thesis, for it is what others say and do that reveals them, just as our own seeing and doing reveal the world to us and our place in it. It is also the turning point of this analysis because it is here that the developmental approach to moral reasoning, on the one hand, and analytical philosophy, on the other, enjoy common ground - in the epistemological sense. While the developmentalists use the analytical methods of the social scientist, and the philosophers do not ignore behavior, these polarities of approach do tend to ignore one another. Valuing is the key, the point of departure, for bringing further analysis to bear.

III

The discussion can now return to the Moral Development model. An acknowledgement is in order, one which pertains first to the centrality of values in its approach to moral development, though it best be described as a valuing process. The second pertains to necessity, obvious in light of this analysis, that the valuing process is, and must remain, the fundamental data source as well as the locus of action in the long road to morally responsible behavior. Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg have been correct on both counts, as to their point of departure, even though their concept of 'values' is given to variance.

Four critical observations are also in order. The first is that the foregoing analysis serves to broaden the concept of value in one sense while narrowing it in another sense. It broadens the concept to include all interests, preferences, desires, both active and latent, good an bad, examined and unexamined, into its repertory of meanings; anything with possible interpersonal consequences that has been predicated or is capable of predication. This is not necessarily bad, for all interpersonal behavior, if not all secret thoughts, may have the potential for social consequences in

one situation or another. So, behaviorist and analytical philosopher alike must take license to look at all possibilities.

The broadened concept of value theory can be further illustrated. It is hardly to be debated that love is valued, but not all love is virtuous. The Texas Rangers valued their guns, as did the Bonnie and Clyde gang, but for different reasons. The point may be illustrated by an eloquent passage from Robert Burns:

> man's inhumanity to man
>
> makes countless thousands mourn! (1900:44)

'Inhumanity' is a subject only in the grammatical sense. Its epistemological importance derives from all the predication which the term encapsulates, for it is a critical judgment not just with reference to senseless suffering but the human behavior from which the suffering ensues. Value and virtue do not have a one-to-one correspondence even though moral philosophers have, for the last century, tended to define 'value' in such a way as to make the word a label for that which is good. And values - culture included - are as much a problem as a benefit to the moral imperatives of our existence. The introspective person must come to know and understand one's own mind, one's own capacity for good and evil, and in the sense all preferences that affect the lives of others have potential consequences about which moral judgments can be made. This point may owe something to Calvinism, stripped of its metaphysical assumptions, of course; but it would well serve the purpose of moral discussion and the investigation of moral behavior by reminding us of our true nature, by countering any prelapsarian notions of innocence on the one hand, and self-authenticating, self-righteousness on the other.

The value-concept is narrowed in the sense that moral judgments, or critical predicates that incorporate some judgment about the appropriateness of an instance of behavior or a behavior pattern, are taken as a class apart from values that may be perceived as having no necessary moral connotation, as for example some food preferences. It follows that if the Yellow Brick Road has some symbolic significance in the form of courage and steadfast maintenance of the journey, then one must go beyond the paving stones to consider that which it may be that influences Dorothy and her pitiful companions. The moral problem rests either in the deed or the absence of the

appropriate deed, the preference for the action taken as opposed to alternatives, the motive for action and not the rationale offered to the public.

This suggests the second critical observation. While the full range of valuing is subject to moral scrutiny, the reasons given for a certain pattern of behavior may not necessarily be the true motive for the behavior. Conversely, the implied consequences might not be the intended or real consequences of an action. This is another point that may be illustrated by the use of literature. For example, Charles Dickens(1942:331) closes the *Tale of Two Cities* with the account of an innocent man dying for his true love. It is a case of substituted identity, in which Sydney Carton has competed with his look-alike, Charles Darnay, for the affections of Lucie Manette, only to lose. That of course is not the crime at issue. Set in the midst of the French Revolution, the novel portrays Darnay as a consort to the uprising, hence a traitor to the French Crown. Carton visits Darnay in his prison cell and takes his place, both there and later at the guillotine. The novel is nothing if it is not romance, and Dickens blows it to its fullest by assigning to Carton the highest of motives: to die inocently in order that unbeguiled love, in the flesh and under God, be fulfilled.

In one respect this great moment of self sacrifice put principle above survival. Yet the Kierkegaardian injunction to will one thing is violated because Carton turned around and promoted guile in the way that he prosecuted his cause - he fooled the court as to who he was. To the court, the teleological relation of means to ends appeared to remain intact; nor was the real breakdown in means-ends consistency a concern to Carton so long as the tactic served his purpose. This may be interpreted as prudentialism in the sense that ethics is the proscenium framing the scene, providing the backdrop, but not the drama itself in which motives remain hidden if even they are fully known to the actor.

There are many who would defend the deceit in a similar instance, and with understandable reason. But is the self-serving deceit truly moral? In this as well as circumstances in which less than life is at stake, principled moral reasoning may represent a high degree of moral consciousness but not necessarily a moral conscience. One should bear in mind that the challenge to address this issue is as formidable as it is serious. There is no easy avenue to private thoughts and motives, especially those of adolescents, that sometimes are not known for years, sometimes

never. Neither would this be desirable in all cases. Still, Power and his colleagues recognize that the challenge is upon educators to utilize every curricular and extracurricular avenue to inject moral considerations into the dilemmas and ambiguities of life. This of course is their reason for the 'just community approach' in which they attempt to penetrate the hidden curriculum. They may readily observe the tactical values because these relate to means. Many of the strategic values - these are the values relating to ends - are likely to escape their attention until after the students graduate.

The third critical observation relates to the dubious nature of what Power and his colleagues have called "universal values." That which the person knows and that which one intends represent the grist for the moral philosopher's mill. It serves no purpose to invoke transcendental prematurely as though truth, justice, and virtue as Forms are more real than the sources and causes for these labels. Granted, the Moral Development point of view does not claim that universals spring from metaphysical sources, but the very term suggests an a priori status, at least in the analytical sense of being taken as true by definition. At one point this stance is suggested in a reference to the individual's need to progress from the "limits of conventional reasoning" and "devise a prior-to-society perspective on moral issues" (1989:55).

Contrary to these presuppositions, "justice, equality, and brotherhood" are nouns owing their invention to the general classes of behavior they represent. They exist only in the abstract; that is to say, as linguistic inventions representing our classification of well known and good-serving preferences - latent values - about how one may wish to view the world. If they are precisely delineated, then they may serve as theoretical constructs, and good ones at that. But not until they are the subject of predication, or the principles involved are put into action, do the heretofore abstract nouns become active values and a public reality. Social analysis proceeds from behavior to people, from valuing in the predicative, phenomenological sense to actors and their motives. Transcendentals there may be, and if they apply, their application is to those who are committed to them. They have their application, no less, to the procession of events that produce blood, sweat, and tears; joy, exhilaration, and consummatory satisfaction; in the one world that counts for everyone. This world it is; where values are predicates, purely and simply.

One reason why values take on the appearance of 'things' as opposed to 'actions' is because we are born into a culture that has evolved, not a changeless utopia. As a child we embraced the seeming a priori notion that our parents' virtues have been forever and their moral imperatives are absolutes (Piaget, 1962:61). But face to face with this illusion one should know, fundamentalism notwithstanding, that one person observes and appropriates the actions of others, actions which have evolved, and it is the action, the predicate manifest, which is epistemologically critical, not the absolutist assumption. Those copied actions modify and serve the purpose of patterning behavior in a manner that accommodates survival. In the sense that they are articulated, codified, memorized and acted upon, they constitute culture. That values are treated as subject is a matter of grammatical convenience; they are not so in the epistemological sense, for we come to know them by observing them, then give them the status of a noun by attaching a label.

The fourth critical observation: Analysis from the perspective of values-as-predicates places the responsibility of moral decision making upon the valuing person, in the situations in which choice is inevitably made; where the person must live with oneself and the consequences of one's actions; where those actions may become known and the consequences of those actions must be risked and born by the person. Hence survival is relative to all judgments leading to action, first in the form of fear, and later to survival in the form of the moral person, or annihilation as opposed to courage.

Though Kohlberg's model is well known, the first and last of his stages are worthy of a closer look with reference as to this point. Consider Stage I, "Avoiding breaking rules backed by punishment; obedience for its own sake; to avoid physical damage to persons and property..." (1989:8) The fear of annihilation in the form of punishment, transitory though it almost always is, stands as the ruling principle - from the point of view of the actor.

At Stage VI principles as such rule: "Following self-chosen ethical principles. Particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles. When laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle..." (1989:9) Though Stage VI addresses the matter of inviolate principle (a priori) as opposed to the law, it does not address the matter of hard choice if the option is between acting according to principle and the survival of the self.

Consistent interpretation will place the principle first in both cases. It may be doubted that the advocates of the theory intend this, and even if they do not, the position is a sound one. For example, virtuous behavior and behavior that is merely prudent may appear to be identical to a disinterested observer until the actor is put to the test. When that same person is called upon to bear the cost of advocating the principle, then the possibility of virtue prevailing, for that person, is clear. It follows that it is not cognitive sophistication, but the willingness to bear this risk, which stands as the criterion of moral maturity - the willingness to put the survival of the principle before self. This existential reality exposes the life of choices upon which moral existence is predicated. The line between virtue - understood in the theoretical and functional and not the Platonic sense - and foolhardiness, is very fine; and the Kohlberg model, its limitations understood, seems not be a tool which by itself may bring persons to understand the price of virtue.

IV

As analysis has brought the matter to this conclusion, so may it serve also to expose the limitations on all moral precepts. This will serve even more to put the responsibility of moral decision making upon the person - in situations - in which choices are made. Hence a consequentialist approach to precepts and their application, with an analysis of preferences and motives and the reasons for the choices that are made, becomes crucial. Choice is the awesome curse that puts us in this predicament; it is, at the same time, the basis upon which life becomes free, morally free, and worthy of pursuit. Without conscious choices and the examination of those choices there would be no morality, only the mindless procession of nature's events indifferent to moral consideration; hence nothing to protect, for only thought leads to choice. Choice in turn is predicated upon preference, and in preference values are betrayed, though not necessarily with readiness or immediacy if they are strategic in nature. The very concept of ethics presupposes first analysis, introspective as well as objective; and second, mastery of behavior toward ends that are edifying to individual and society.

Instrumental behavior, consistent with the end in view, leads to that consummatory experience in which principle is fulfilled without further justification, but only when virtue - principle worthy by this standard - is the objective. It leads to the consummatory moment, nonconsequentialist in the sense that its realization has no further end. This may be just beyond the reach of mortals insofar as any certainty is concerned except as death may prove the matter in some great moment. But the road there is by instrumentation and the consideration of consequences, virtue being one of them and the last of them, in a life and world of ambiguity that tests our sense of direction, sincerity, and resolve, at every turn. Paradoxical it is, though fitting, that the dove so innocent and the serpent wise were once jointly prescribed as models for this inexorable journey (Matthew 10:16).

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